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ABSTRACT

Drawing on previous research by themselves and others, the authors argue, first, that despite findings that principals spend little time in instructional leadership activities, principals are more deeply engaged in organizational goal attainment than has been believed; and, second, that despite findings that communications between principals and central administrative offices are minimal, the organization is more tightly coupled than has been thought. The reason for this paradoxical situation is that the professed goals of the educational system--the development of a curriculum and the provision of instruction in that curriculum--are not in fact the operative goals of the system. These operative goals, described at some length with examples from the authors' previous research, are managing environmental uncertainty, maintaining an organizational mythology, and rewarding the organization's employees. Many informal control mechanisms, such as principal selection procedures, group norms, traditions, and expectations, have been internalized by the management hierarchy and serve to tighten the coupling of bureaucratic elements despite lack of communication along the formal chain of command. The authors conclude that, textbook job descriptions notwithstanding, it is the principal who achieves the system's operative goals who is considered successful and makes professional gains. (Author/PGD)

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THE PRINCIPAL'S ROLE IN ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL-ATTAINMENT:

Discretionary Management at the School Site Level

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THE PRINCIPAL'S ROLE IN ORGANIZATION GOAL-ATTAINMENT

Discretionary Management at the School Site Level

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I. INTRODUCTION

The school principalship has recently become the subject for research investigations into on-the-job behavior (in the mode of Mintzberg[1]). Two important findings emerging from these studies warrant closer scrutiny. First, building principals do not spend much time in instructional leadership. Second, the building principalship appears to be very "loosely coupled" with the remainder of the organizational hierarchy.

Regarding the first finding, (a paucity of attention to instruction), we note that Kent Peterson (1978) found elementary principals spending less than 5 percent of their time in classrooms and no more than 6 percent of the day planning and coordinating the school program, curriculum, or instructional materials. Martin and Willower (1981) discovered that high school principals spend just 17.4 percent of their time on instructional matters (teacher supervision plus curriculum development, etc.), and our own study of principals (Morris, Crowson, Hurwitz, and Porter-Gehrie, 1981) noted that principals spend an average of just 7 to 9 percent of their time observing teachers.[2]

On the second finding (loose coupling), we note that Hannaway and Sproull (1979) plus Deal and Celotti (1980) have investigated "linkages" between school site-level administrators and the upper organizational hierarchy.[3] These investigators report that little of the working day, in either sector, is spent responding to initiatives of coordination and control originating in the other. Communication "from the top down" and "from the bottom up" appears to be equally

minimal. Furthermore, both site-level and upper-level managers spend little of their time coordinating and controlling the "core" tasks of the organization, namely, curriculum and instruction. Thus, classroom instruction, they report, is "virtually unaffected" by organizational and administrative factors.

Paradoxically, these findings appear in the literature simultaneous with an increased interest in and heightened attention to the study of the effect of administrative behavior on learning outcomes (Erikson, 1977, 1979).[4] Also, paradoxically, the findings of minimal hierarchical control are given circulation throughout the profession at the same time that a counter claim is being made that "hyperrationalization" (Wise, 1979) of educational policy (e.g., federal regulations and reporting requirements) is putting unacceptable constraints on local administrative autonomy.[5]

In sorting out these conflicting arguments, it is natural to ask who is closer to the truth. In answering this question, we wish to examine more closely (a) the principal's role in goal-attainment and (b) the question of the principal's coupling, loose or otherwise, with the remainder of the organization. We reexamine some of the earlier observations presented in our 1981 report, and we offer some theoretical perspectives on the discretionary behaviors of building principals together with some additional information regarding the principalship drawn from our Chicago data. Our overall thesis is this:

-- the building principal is engaged in organizational goal attainment to a much greater degree than the evidence of time spent in "instructional leadership" leads us to believe, and

-- large public school systems are more tightly coupled than we have customarily thought.

II. BACKGROUND

One year ago, at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, we joined two colleagues from the University of Illinois at Chicago (Professors Emanuel Hurwitz, Jr. and Cynthia Porter-Gehrie) in reporting our findings from an ethnographic-style study of school principals in Chicago. This report is to serve as the basis for a text on the principalship to be published by Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company some time in 1983.

Our study of principals in Chicago focused on two dimensions of the job of "principaling":

-- What is it that principals do (how do they spend their time?) during the work day?

-- How do principals use opportunities for "discretionary decision-making" in the course of managing their respective schools?

On time usage, we found that instructional leadership (in terms of time spent in classroom observation and teacher supervision) is not the central focus of the principalship. Rather, our findings support the Martin and Willower (1981) observation that organizational maintenance/stability activities comprise the bulk of the school-site manager's working day. Activities that represent major commitments of time are: (a) school monitoring behaviors (touring the corridors; receiving information on "what's going on" from staff, students, and parents; checking on activities in progress); (b) conflict reduction efforts (settling disputes between students or staff, handling student discipline, dealing with unexpected crises or injuries): (c) operational "smoothing" (overseeing pupil scheduling and staff deployment, coordinating school facilities and materials usage); and (d) school liaison efforts (giving information to parents; passing information from the organizational hierarchy to teachers).

With regard to principal's discretionary behavior, we found building administrators actively engaged in "bending" organizational rules. They were seen (a) trying to enhance their school site, in competition with other schools within the system (e.g., acquiring extra resources, embellishing school "image" in the local press, ignoring attendance boundaries and "raiding" other districts for students in order that a higher body-count might yield a larger budget allocation); (b) lubricating the daily management of their schools by "short-circuiting" the organizational labyrinth (e.g., getting personal friends in the hierarchy to grant special favors); (c) assisting selectively with the special needs and interests of pupils and parents (e.g., rigidly enforcing system regulations for troublesome students or parents and, an hour later, going beyond district policy in granting exceptions and outright favors to "cooperative" parents); and (d) furthering their own careers or at least their level of job satisfaction (e.g., cultivating the "good soldier" status by volunteering for the dirty work of a superior, maneuvering for promotions).

In sum, our findings from Chicago confirm the observations of other researchers that working principals are not significantly engaged in instructional leadership (in the classroom observation/teacher supervision sense), but are heavily engaged in organizational maintenance and stability and, moreover, are quite willing, in their maintenance role, to "bend" system rules.

II. SOME THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

A. Goal Displacement

The question now is whether all of this maintenance and rule-bending activity not only corroborates the "loosely coupled" concept of educational management, but also suggests a high degree of goal displacement as well. Are principals too busy "surviving" to be concerned about the exercise of explicitly educational leadership?

This was essentially the view expressed in one of the earliest, intensive analyses of a large-city school system--David Rogers' 110 Livingston Street in 1968.[6] In observing the discretionary behavior of principals in New York City, Rogers concluded that the organizational hierarchy had lost effective control over its managerial subordinates; the bureaucratic apparatus was essentially "sick". Rogers portrayed a moribund (worse, a "pathological") New York City School System so filled with political infighting and inertia that building principals were free to ignore or revise school board policy with impunity. Rogers' interpretation of insubordinate behavior at the site level was of an organization "gone wrong". A "healthy organization," he argued, is one with effective information flows and monitoring/control systems such that "key decision-makers are always in touch with what is going on in the field." (Rogers, 1968; 324).

Rogers' discovery of goal displacement received support from our own data. We, like Rogers, saw principals sabotaging board of education desegregation policy in order to maintain stable school-site enrollment levels. We observed principals "working the system" to give higher administrators the impression of gains in pupil reading scores when such gains in real terms were questionable. We saw principals deliberately ignoring board directives for greater parent involvement in their schools in favor of a pragmatic, "survival" strategy tacitly recommended by the principalship fraternity; active parents can get a principal into trouble with a teaching faculty and can destabalize rapport with hierarchical superiors through overweening mischief.

In addition, if not outright goal displacement, we saw building principals occasionally bend organizational rules in ways that served the school's clients at the apparent expense of the larger bureaucracy. In one of the chapters in our 1981 report we tried to capture this point in coining the phrase: CREATIVE INSUBORDINATION. The creative insubordination idea supported Wolcott's (1973)[7]

finding that in the midst of the apparent impersonality and standardization of the large organization, the building principal may often ignore or disobey orders from above in order to dilute their dehumanizing effects. The 1981 report outlined four exemplary "modes" of creative insubordination--each of which appeared to us to be a ploy aimed at "humanizing" organizational rules. A first example (a ploy that failed) involved a principal's attempt to "save" the job of an able staff member in the face of a cutback order with a seniority rule that saved instead the job of an incompetent. A second ploy ("the gentlemen's agreement") involved two high school principals "in cahoots" to defy a pupil transfer order that would have resulted in a heavy loss of learning time for the students of both schools. The third and fourth ploys both involved a defiance of school system "paper-work" requirements in the interest of protecting the school-site from inundations of forms, deadlines, "reports", questionnaires, etc. Our initial report concluded its brief examination of the creative insubordination phenomenon as follows:

> For the conscientious principal, the objective is to use the organizational apparatus in such a way that the ultimate client, the student, is most adequately served. This may mean, at times, that the organizational apparatus, and the chain of command in particular, must be used against itself in order to render the institution's actions humane as well as efficient.

B. Site-Level Discretion and Goal-Attainment

In the main, however, we would suggest that the chain of command is not so much used against itself by building principals as it is used in the attainment of some important, operative goals for the organization. Our argument proceeds from Charles Perrow's (1978) observation that human service organizations perform critical tasks apart from the pursuit of their "professed" goals.[8] Not unlike the sociologists' distinction between manifest and latent functions, we hold that the daily activity of the building principal serves many operative needs of the educational organization beyond its commonly understood objectives of instructional results.

Among these are:

(a) assisting the organization in managing environmental uncertainity,

(b) assisting the maintenance of an organizational mythology, and

(c) assisting the provision of rewards to the employees of the organization.

In the following section, we examine each of these in turn, noting as both Lortie (1969) and Gouldner(1954) have pointed out, that many informal mechanisms of control--principal selection procedures, group norms, traditions, and expectations--have been internalized by the management hierarchy and serve to tighten rather than loosen the "coupling" of bureaucratic elements, despite the seeming impotence of the formal chain of command.[9]

IV. ATTAINING "OPERATIVE GOALS"

A. Managing environmental uncertainty

James D. Thompson's carefully constructed book Organizations in Action (1967)[10] points out that (a) "dealing with uncertainty" is a basic challenge to the survival of any organization and (b) an organization's need for discretion in order to handle uncertainty is typically distributed differentially throughout the organization (p. 117). The task of coping with environmental contingencies is not confined to the top of the administrative hierarchy; rather, it is an important function that spans and links all administrative levels (Thompson, 1967: 149-150). Thus, particular elements of uncertainty confront the "central office" level of school board and superintendent: school revenue shortfalls, state or federal rules changes, shifts in public opinion toward education, far-reaching court decisions. Coordinately, at the service-delivery point, the school site, uncertainty takes on a different face: community/parent unrest, fluctuations

in student enrollment and daily attendance (a critical variable in state-aid allotments), student disruptions or injuries, and neighborhood "pathologies" such as drugs, gangs, or family instability.

The "environmental uncertainty" phenomenon has generated much recent interest in "boundary-spanning" (Moore, 1975) and "street-level bureaucracy" (Lipsky, 1976, 1980; Weatherley, 1979) as modes of administrative style for school principals.[11] Both terms describe those managers who are in closest contact (in a service delivery sense) with an organization's key clientele. These individuals must exercise discretion in mediating between client needs on the one hand and the rules, resources and expectations of the larger bureaucracy. In an earlier analysis of our own data from the "street-level bureaucracy perspective" (Crowson and Porter-Gehrie, 1980)[12] we identified a number of "coping mechanisms" that principals use to handle uncertainties of resource adequacy, role ambiguity, and administrative authority.

From our further observation of "principaling," we would now offer the hypothesis that the site-level manager has been socialized to accept three, key expectations of organizational behavior in the management of uncertainty:

First, the expectation that the "technical core" of the organization must be protected from intrusion and attack. The "technical core" of the school is classroom instruction, and the principal is fully involved daily with efforts to "back his teachers up" in encounters with pupils, parents, and the community. For example, Principal James Martin expressed dismay and disbelief ("Oh, that couldn't have happened") in hearing from a parent that her fourth-grader's teacher had been hitting some of the pupils with a ruler. Afterwards, in private, Martin exclaimed: "I've warned her to put that ruler down." In another example, Principal Cynthia Solari took pains just before the end of the

first marking period to warn each of her school's new teachers (a number had been transferred from other buildings) that the parents at Wirth High School are prone to question grades, and the teachers should be sure to place lots of "marks" in their grade books for each pupil. In a final example of "Protectionism," Principal Arthur Lipton agreed with his teachers to lock the outer doors of the school at 8:10 a.m. each day, following teacher complaints that student tardiness at the start of each day. In private, Lipton observed that he thought student absenteeism was a much greater problem for the school than tardiness, but the teachers were upset by the disruption caused be late-comers.

A second expectation in meeting environmental uncertainty places the principal in the position of insuring a "fit" between the school system's services and the parent/pupil clientele. As reported earlier (in Morris, Crowson, Porter-Gehrie, and Hurwitz, 1981) the building principal assumes a "client socialization role"--in terms of de-educating the public about the school's capabilities, and re-educating parents and others as to just what they can and cannot expect from their local school. This effort may involve a number of activities that range from (a) "co-opting" dissident parents (e.g., talking a "concerned" mother into helping with pupil supervision during the lunch hour), to (b) "training" parents in acceptable behavior (e.g., refusing to see the father of a disruptive student at an evening open house, insisting that he come during the day with time off from work); to (c) deflating parent expectations (e.g., counseling a mother concerned about her child's grades that the teacher cannot send home a report card every Friday).

One of the most common client socialization activities is that of cultivating conformity with the school's categorization of pupils and services.

For example, Principal John Soblicki, in discussing William's behavioral problems with his mother pointed out that William's conduct in his "regular classroom" is now very, very bad. He speaks out of turn, doesn't stay in his seat, doesn't accept teacher authority, and is a general nuisance to the other children; all in all, concluded Soblicki, a regular classroom no longer seems appropriate for William. He would be much better off in special education, with teachers well trained to give social adjustment help and provided with lots of time for individual attention. William's mother adamantly spoke against the special education idea, indicating that William is now seeing a private psychologist and the doctor has argued that a special education placement at this time might only make the boy's behavior worse. Soblicki answered that he can only deal with the fact that William is not behaving in the regular classroom. Soblicki went on to warn that he could just suspend William from school entirely, and concluded by urging the mother to let him know within two weeks what her decision would be, but warned again that if William misbehaved during the two weeks he would have to suspend him.

Finally, a third expectation of the principalship is that the site-level manager must meet and "handle" local situations without threat to the upper hierarchy. This phenomenon has been observed in a number of studies of the job, and has been variously labeled as an organizational pressure for: (a) "variety-reducing behavior" and "keeping the lid on" (Wolcott, 1973); (b) "good order" and "efficient housekeeping" (Sarason, 1971); and (c) "keeping things calm" (Blumberg and Greenfield, 1980).[13]

Considerable pressure for site-level stabilization comes from hierarchical superiors, who generally expect the principal "to keep his own ship in order" and to manage localized conflict without troubling the upper bureaucracy. In

our earlier report (1981) we documented some of the day-by-day stabilization behaviors of principals, including their efforts to anticipate possible problems in advance of their occurrence and to control the "fallout" from events that do get out of hand. In an example of an event that "backfired", an irresponsible teacher at the Phillips School "lost" two children on a field trip to the zoo. A search was unproductive, and the school bus had to return to the home school with the rest of the children, leaving a continuation of the search to city police and zoo officials. The children were found, but not before quite a few people (many parents, the police, the principal's hierarchal superiors) became aware (to the principal's embarrassment) of the incident. In a counter example, the principal of the Barber Elementary School took a close personal interest in a field trip to a local museum on a "bad-weather day". Assured that the expected buses would arrive, but late, the principal called the museum to make sure that the museum cafeteria would still serve the children late lunches and that the expected tour guides would still be available. The principal also carefully "saw the children off" as well as monitored their return, making sure that parents who were expected to accompany the class did in fact go along.

B. Maintaining an Organizational Mythology

Meyer and Rowan (1978) have suggested that educational organizations function to maintain agreed-upon myths, rites, and what amounts to a student "caste system".[14] Similarly, Hannaway and Sproull (1979) and Burlingame (1980) argue that the school administrator's job is not so much to oversee the "core technology" of the organization (i.e., classroom instruction) as it is to maintain the legitimacy of the organization, in the form of "mystifications, myths and cover-ups" that are critical to organizational survival.[15]

Our observations reveal that principals do engage in activities of a myth-maintaining character. For example, the principal is expected to insure

an ordered environment for student learning. To this end, the principal orchestrates the school's total resources--teacher time, materials availability, lunchroom scheduling, janitor clean-up, guidance services--in such a way that, like an automobile assembly line, each element is delivered to or made available to the student according to a well-articulated, habituated routine.

We find also, in tune with Willower(1967, 1973) that principals sustain a pupil control ideology, another essentially unspoken expectation of their work. They are heavily involved on a daily basis with the supervision of school decorum and disciplinary order. Like policemen on the beat, they make sure that they are conspicuously visible during times of heavy student traffic in the corridors, that "trouble spots" are closely watched, and that consistently unruly youngsters are frequently monitored and "checked out". Periodic corridor cruises enable the principal to convey additional messages of proper student behavior and attire, and to endow the hallways with a businesslike perspective. The monitoring of student language (e.g., no swearing or showing "disrespect"), of clothing (e.g., no hats or hair nets), of student decorum (keep your voices down") is a common emphasis in principaling behavior, all leading to a general "policing" of the overall ambiance of the learning environment.

As ideology, the "pupil control" and "ordered learning environment" effort is closely tied functionally to the complexity of the principal-teacher relationship. Their relationship to the client, the student, is psychologically different. As Bidwell (1965) has noted, there is a "fundamental dichotomy" between the role of student and that of teacher.[17] Students are compelled to enter schooling and are socialized to adult life in activities that are not centrally relevant to their immediate interests. Teachers, on the other hand, enter their roles voluntarily and are provided continuing incentives in return

for their professional contributions. The conventional wisdom holds that students, therefore, must be "controlled" and their attention explicitly directed to a learning effort, if classroom teachers are to maximize their contributions to, not to mention their satisfactions from, their instructional role. This is where the principal comes in. In return for guaranteeing some semblance of pupil control and situational orderliness, the building administrator receives the commitment and obeisance of the school faculty.

Additionally, by overseeing and orchestrating the proper "matching" of student needs/interests and staff-member responsiblities/expectations, the principal guides the dichotomous roles of student and teacher into some approximation of productive harmony. The following example of just thirty minutes of activity out of one busy high school principal's day, for instance, finds this principal (a) quelling some pupil rowdiness, (b) enforcing work-rules among non-instructional staff members, (c) using discretion in applying school rules to students (lenient with freshmen, tougher on upperclassmen), (d) expressing displeasure with one teacher's weakness in student discipline, (e) checking to see that some students who need tutorial service are in fact getting assistance, (f) following up on a knifing incident from the previous day, and (g) helping a student who is not yet "programmed" correctly into the proper schedule of classes.

Item:

12:57 p.m. Principal James Rickers goes upstairs to lunch. On the stairway, on the way up to the fourth floor cafeteria, he spots one male student throwing some wadded-up paper at another. Rickers stops both boys ("What are you doing? Where are you supposed to be?") and takes time to ask and make a note of the paper thrower's name.

12:59 Rickers proceeds through the large student cafeteria on the way to the faculty lunchroom area. On the way he checks, tries to locate the two adults (aides) who are supposed to be on duty in the cafeteria, and failing to find either aide, expresses his concern and anger.

1:00 As Rickers nears the faculty serving area, he notices that two girls are listening to a portable radio. Both are younger students (freshmen) and Rickers takes a moment to explain school policy (no radios) and to point out that in the future the radio will be confiscated, to be held in the office till the end of the day.

1:01 Just inside the faculty area, one of the aides on cafeteria duty is sitting having a cup of coffee. The aide sees Rickerts, the two exchange glances, and the aide rises, drains a last mouthful of coffee, and returns to duty.

1:02 Rickers is joined at lunch by the school's choir director. During the course of a conversation about the music program and the scheduling of performances, Rickers expresses his displeasure with the choir director over yesterday's situation. The director left some students unattended in the choir room for a short while and there was a bit of rowdiness.

1:15 Rickers leaves the cafeteria and descends to the second floor, where he enters a geometry classroom. There are six students just getting underway in a special geometry tutorial to help those who have failed first semester. Rickers wants to make sure that all of those who had been "invited" to the special tutorial will in fact attend.

1:17 Back in the hall, Rickers spots another student with a radio. This is an older student, and this time Rickers confiscates the radio, telling the boy to pick it up in the office after school.

1:18 Rickers returns to the school's first floor and runs into the school's police officer (Officer B). Officer B and Rickers talk for a few minutes about a knifing incident that took place earlier in the week. B informs the principal that one of the individuals involved is back in school today. Rickers says he wants this person located and brought to the office because he's still on suspension.

1:21 A student approaches Rickers while he's standing in the first floor hall. The student has a scheduling conflict and tells Rickers she's having trouble getting her program for the second semester worked out.

1:22 Rickers walks with the pupil to the office of the assistant principal who's in charge of pupil scheduling. The assistant isn't in. Rickers leaves him a note, asking him to attend to the girl's program.

1:24 Rickers crosses to the office of the school's associate principal, talks with her briefly about pupil attendance concerns and the work of her office for student attendance.

1:25 Rickers returns to his own office.

Another sector of myth-maintaining conduct by the principal concerns the expectation that the local school will guide youngsters into societally acceptable standards of adult behavior (e.g., "good" work habits, punctuality, cooperativeness). Principal Ruth Porter, for example, explains that she schedules a series of assemblies each year, wherein each pupil at some time during the year must stand before the student body and say something to the entire group. The topic of today's assembly "is based on New Year's resolutions and all of the things that the students are going to do to be better next year." Porter goes on to mention that the central purpose of these assemblies is to "teach the children to have poise and to be able to handle themselves in a public setting."

Principals give careful attention to matters of student dress, language and deportment. More than an element of student control, this concern is very much a part of the educator's socialization-to-adulthood responsiblity, the notion of what "teaching a child to grow up" is all about. As an example consider the case of Ralph Marshall, a recent graduate of the Burnham School.

Item: Ralph Marshall drops into principal Willard Jeffers' office to say hello. Ralph is now in high school, having graduated from Burnham School's eighth grade last spring. Jeffers asks Ralph how he's doing and says, "I'd expect you to do well." Jeffers also asks about the boy's interest and involvement in sports, and cautions: "Don't spend a whole lot of time outside of class until you get your academic work well in hand."

Young Marshall then asks the principal if he could have back his earrings, mentioning "I don't wear them anymore, but I'd like to have them back anyway."

Jeffers goes to his desk, pulls out a couple of envelopes and hands them to the boy. Ralph takes them and comments: "I never thought I'd see these again." Jeffers responds: "I told you that your parents could come in and get them any time they wanted to, or you would have them after you graduated."

The Marshall boy then asks principal Jeffers why he's so concerned with making sure that male students don't wear earrings in the school. Jeffers answers: "I don't believe earrings are going to help you develop the confidence you need in life." The principal goes on to state that originally males wearing earrings were identified with gangs; they represent a "street image" that doesn't belong in the elementary school. The Marshall boy agrees that it's true that kids do it to "show they're cool". Jeffers says that younger children in the school look up to the image set by the older ones; the younger kids don't realize there's that street-gang relationship, and the Burnham school shouldn't be a setting where those kinds of identifications are made.

More than just the management of the school's overall pupil socialization role, the "guidance" expectation of the building principalship is often applied to students who represent "loose ends" for the school community (e.g., both the very fast and the very slow academically, the school's worst troublemakers, the athletically gifted). For example, the principals frequently direct their personal attention to both "tails" of a school's distribution of academic talent. It is not uncommon for the principal to arrange special tutoring for those students who appear to be progressing more slowly than expected and at the same time take a special interest in enrichment or "fast track" opportunities for top students.

Principals also devote effort to the "saving" of good but troubled kids in the school. Not uncommon is the principal who takes on "special cases" of his own (e.g., a bright girl with a "runaway" problem). These students will be treated as a "protectorate," the principal "sticking up for them" and interceding on their behalf with classroom teachers. On the other hand, chronic "trouble-makers" will be counseled into transferring to another building or will be made to feel unwelcome in their present environment (e.g., with many in-school suspensions or assignment to the very toughest teachers). The high school principal, however, (particularly the male principal) is simultaneously on the lookout for tall, athletic looking boys, troublesome or not, who can be urged into participation in the school's sports program.

At the elementary level, many principals give considerable attention to the creation and supervision of a complex and expansive rewards program for the school. Common are certificates, ribbons, medals and other physical symbols for pupils with superior attendance, art work, poetry and essay accomplishments, science projects, numbers of library books read, Halloween costumes, drama readings, music or dance performances, athletic (gym class) prowess, school "helpfulness" (e.g., visual aids aides), spelling ability and penmanship.

The significance of the principal's student socialization effort is communicated best, however, in the following example of the strange case of Richard Brown. Richard, a high school student, has a history of truancy but, to everyone's surprise, wins a city-wide science fair. Richard's principal elects to punish the truancy rather than reward the achievement.

Item: High School principal Sheldon Moore is very angry with Richard Brown, a seventeen-year-old with a history of truancy. Interestingly, despite Richard's poor school attendance record, the boy has just finished competing (and has emerged a winner) in the citywide science fair. Moore shakes his head and exclaims: "I really don't know how you can do so well in the science fair yet can't seem to stay in school. You know you've played long enough, and school isn't a place where you can come and just play around. You're 17 years old and have only completed two credits toward graduation. You should soon be going into your senior year." After a bit of further discussion, Moore suggests to the boy that he should "check out of school" for awhile until he's ready to become serious about showing up.

C. Operating the Reward System

Illinois' former State Superintendent, Joseph Cronin, once remarked that he and his colleagues really didn't understand the Boston Public Schools until they realized that the school system served first and foremost as a bastion of protected professional employment. In spite of unruly kids, excess paper work, and stress-producing demands, teachers know that teaching is good, steady work with frequent vacations and, usually, a good pension system. But teachers, like the rest of us, usually want something more--namely, some kind of formal apparatus for surveilling their work, acknowledging their skills, and institutionally recognizing their value to the organization. In the supervisory role, therefore, principals have redirected their efforts toward the "operative" organizational objective of facilitating the process of distributing rewards for classroom teachers.

In our research, we have learned that the building principal assists in maintaining and servicing the organization's reward system for teachers in at least two ways:

First, the principal spends time protecting the autonomy norm of classroom teaching. Despite their responsiblity for teacher evaluation and classroom observation/control, principals conform heavily to the attitude that: "My job is to free teachers to teach." Much time is spent seeing that sufficient

textbooks are available (e.g., trading math books for science texts with another school), supplies are at the ready (e.g., even personally running to a store for an emergency order of ditto-masters), and that furniture or equipment is properly in place (e.g., scouting the storeroom for an extra-large desk for an oversized third-grader). Similarly, efforts by principals to minimize the teacher's paperwork, to hold disruptive pupils out of the classroom, and to use non-teaching staff (e.g., CETA aides) wherever possible for non-teaching duties (e.g., lunchroom control) represent further obeisance to the autonomy norm.

In keeping with the autonomy norm, we also find principals re-directing energies into "instruction-related" efforts that blend in some way with the supervisary role but lead to a more clearly observable "end product". Many principals, for example, take a special interest in the bulletin board activity of the school, urging the display of student work and often "plastering" the school with learning-oriented slogans and sayings. Other principals occupy themselves with fund raising, with student counseling, with building the extra-curricular activity program or with pupil testing and evaluation.

The autonomy norm is further honored in the time principals devote to interceding between their teachers and the bureaucracy to guard teacher welfare and benefits. Shaking missing checks out of the downtown payroll office, assisting teachers who need a day off (beyond the number of personal leave days that are usually permitted) - are just a few of the welfare actions of the principal. Of course "cooperative" and "productive" teachers are likely to receive much more attention and assistance than those considered "goof-offs" or "trouble-makers".

Principal Robert Mathews, for example, spent a number of hours one day trying to clear up a payroll error for one of his better teachers, Miss Colby. Miss Colby had been on sick leave for eleven days in September and had been "docked" for those days when in fact she did have that much sick leave coming.

It took some complicated bureaucratic maneuvering to correct the error, and Matthews worked hard on Miss Colby's behalf. During the same day, however, he rejected a request for help from Mrs. Walker, whom he considered a very uncooperative person. Mrs. Walker had been absent the day before a holiday, and asked Matthews to "cover" for her. He wouldn't, because of bureaucratic rules; thus Mrs. Walker also lost two days of holiday pay.

A second aspect of reward management is the effort devoted to the "happy family". The principalship carries a bit of an image of the "priesthood" - with a picture of a caring, knowledgeable, and powerful authority-figure who really can direct action and make changes in the school. Although the "real" power of the building principal is recognizably limited, in both a formal (e.g., the union control) and an informal (e.g., the norm of teacher autonomy) sense, principals nevertheless try to project a picture of managerial directiveness by treating the school as a "happy family". The bureaucracy at large expects this; and the organization is infused with naval metaphors (McCullogh, 1981) that imply a leader in full control of his or her own unit (e.g., "smooth sailing," "riding the waves," "captain of the ship").[18]

While the direct intervention of the principal in classroom instruction is minimal, the indirect attention of the principal to such possibly instruction-related forces as "school spirit" is sizable. Thus we find (as do Martin and Willower, 1981) that the building principal directs considerable attention to the extra-curricular activity program of the school.[19] The student activity effort is perceived as a "unifying force" that is worth a lot in school spirit--generating an atmosphere of pride, accomplishment, and school-identification. Motivational strategems are used also with classroom teachers, with the creation of special awards and "togetherness" programs. Twice each year (in January and in June), for example, high school principal James Tilden awards "good attendance" ribbons

and certificates to faculty members with the fewest absences. Although there is much joking and kidding among teachers at the awards ceremony, the awardees wear the ribbons proudly.

A possibly dark side of the "happy family" notion, on the other hand, is a tendency to ignore or "cover up" rifts, inconsistencies, or special problems. Although principal Richards monitors very closely the behavior of teacher Alfred Mason, Mason's alcoholism is kept a careful secret from parents, the students, and the school system's upper levels. Similarly, grievances are studiously avoided, schisms between groups of faculty go unattended (e.g., upper elementary teachers vs. the lower elementary), and in situations where there is a decidedly "unhappy" family (with the principal gravely at odds with his teachers) many months and some years may go by before news of the warfare reaches outside ears.

All in all, however, it is in this arena of the reward structure that we find a rationale and justification for the principal's attention to that elusive but possibly important element in student learning: the school "climate". There is much interest at present in identifying the possible effect of school climate upon learning (e.g., Brookover, 1979; Grant, 1980)[20] and by identifying the building principal's ability to affect school climate. Our analysis suggests that insofar as principals do devote themselves to "climate creation", the motive may not derive as much from a sense of instructional leadership as it does from the organizational expectation that teacher, pupil and parent rewards will be distributed and manipulated at the site level in such a way as to insure organizational stability (e.g., a sail on smooth waters, a sure hand on the tiller). Morale is heavily dependent not on the size, but on the fairness, of the rewards, and morale is a critical variable in engendering a healthy and productive learning environment.

V. SUMMARY

Among scholars of school administration, the school principalship has over the years remained something of an enigma. After decades of examination, the job persists in being performed in a manner quite unlike the textbook descriptions of it. The lack of symmetry between theory and practice continues to puzzle and confound us.

In the present paper, we believe we have detected a latent cause for this condition. Specifically, we believe that the building principalship must be analyzed and understood not according to some received canon of professional conduct but rather in terms of the operative goals of the organization over which the principal presides. Thus, instead of continuing our dead-end preoccupation with "instructional leadership" as a rubric of investigation, we should turn instead to what the organization qua organization is busy pursuing as its corporate end values: (a) managing environmental uncertainty, (b) maintaining an organizational mythology, and (c) engendering an internal reward system. Since the principal is responsible for seeing to it that the institutional goals are systematically pursued, he or she is therefore at the center of these goal-attainment efforts. And therefore these are the things a principal actually does at work. These activities are thus central to the principal's definition of his own job--not written down somewhere, but rather lived out in overt behavior, minute by minute, day by day. They constitute what a principal does; they therefore define what a principal is.

Looked at in this light, it should not be surprising that the principal spends so little time on other things, such as "instructional leadership". More important, with this perspective, we can now understand more clearly the selective character of the "coupling" phenomenon. So far as instruction is concerned, the

principal is indeed loosely coupled with others in the bureaucratic apparatus. His or her efforts at improving teaching may arouse only a marginal interest among superiors at headquarters downtown. But when it comes to the operative goals of the enterprise, the principal is under constant surveillance and is considered an integral unit in an administrative team. In this regard, it is important to remember that all members of this team, principals and bureaucrats alike, have been socialized to the bureaucracy's elaborate but subtle network of expectations. Each principal has internalized these expectations as his own, and has shaped his professional behavior to accommodate them. Thus, in this sphere, the principal is closely coupled with his associates, and any faltering in performance in operative goal attainment is quickly seized upon as the telltale signs of incompetence. Which is to say that principals are rarely dismissed for poor teaching in their schools, but are quickly relieved of their duties if they cannot manage an uncertain environment, protect and advance the bureaucracy's party-line orthodoxy, or provide for a workable, tranquilly functioning reward system.

Like other middle executives, school principals inexorably become, at least in part, reflections of the entities in which they function. The long shadow of the educational apparatus eventually exacts its own compliance, and specifies what is most important to spend one's time on from 7:45 in the morning to 3:45 in the afternoon.

NOTES

1. H. Mintsberg, The Nature of Managerial Work (New York: Harper and Row, 1973).

2. See, for example: K.D. Peterson, "The Principal's Tasks," Administrator's Notebook, Vol. 26. No. 8 (1977-78): 1-4; W.J. Martin and D.J. Willower, "The Managerial Behavior of High School Principals," Educational Administration Quarterly, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Winter 1981): 69-190; and V.C. Morris, R.L. Crowson, C. Porter-Gehrie, and E. Hurwitz, The Urban Principal: Discretionary Decision-Making in a Large Educational Organization, a research report (Chicago: University of Illinois at Chicago Circle, 1981).

3. T.E. Deal and L.D. Celotti, "How Much Influence Do (and Can) Educational Administrators Have on Classrooms?" Phi Delta Kappan, Vol. 61, No. 7 (March, 1980): 471-473. Also, J. Hannaway and L.S. Sproull, "Who's Running the Show? Coordination and Control in Educational Organizations," Administrator's Notebook, Vol 27, No. 9 (1978-79): 1-4.

4. D.A. Erickson, Educational Organization and Administration (Berkeley, Calif.: McCutchan Publishing Corp., 1977); also D.A. Erickson, "Research on Educational Administration: The State-of-the-Art," Educational Researcher, Vol. 8, No. 3 (March 1979): 9-14.

5. A.E. Wise, Legislated Learning: The Bureaucratization of the American Classroom, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1979).

6. D. Rogers, 110 Livingston Street (New York: Vintage Books, 1968).

7. H.F. Wolcott. The Man in the Principal's Office (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973).

8. C. Perrow, "Demystifying Organizations," In R.C. Sarri & Y. Hasenfeld (eds), The Management of Human Services (New York: Colombia University Press, 1978).

9. See, D. Lortie, "The Balance of Control and Autonomy in Elementary School Teaching," in A. Etzioni (ed) The Semi-Professions and Their Organization (New York: Free Press, 1969): 1-53.

10. See J.D. Thompson, Organization in Action (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1967).

11. See, M.T. Moore, The Boundary-Spanning Role of the Urban School Principal. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1975; also, M. Lipsky, Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Service (New York: Basic Books, 1980); and R.A. Weatherley, Reforming Special Education: Policy Implementation from State Level to Street Level (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1979)

12. R.L. Crowson and C. Porter-Gehrie, "The Discretionary Behavior of Principals

in Large-City Schools," Educational Administration Quarterly, 1980, 16, 1, 45-69.

13. See, Wolcott, op cit., also, S.B. Sarason, The Future of the School and the Problem of Change (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1971); and A. Blumberg, and W. Greenfield, The Effective Principal: Perspectives on School Leadership (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1980).

14. See, J.W. Meyer, and B. Rowan, "The Structure of Educational Organizations," in M.W. Meyers and Associates, Environments and Organizations (San Francisco Jossey-Bass, 1978).

15. See, J. Hannaway, and L.S. Sproull, "Who's Running the Show?" Coordination and Control in Educational Organizations," Administrator's Notebook, 1979, 27, 9, 1-4; also, M. Burlingame, "Protecting Private REalities by Managing Public Symbols: Mystifications, Cover-ups, and Martrydom," Paper presented at AERA, Boston, April, 1980.

16. See D.J. Willower, T.L. Eidell, and W.K. Hoy, The School and Pupil Control Ideology, the Pennsylvania State University Studies No. 24 (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University, 1967, 1973).

17. C.E. Bidwell, "The School as a Formal Organization," in J.E. March (ed) Handbook of Organizations (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1965): 972-1022.

18. R.A. McCullogh, "The Occupational Ethos of Senior High School Principals," paper presented at AERA, Los Angeles, 1981.

19. Research by Martin and Willower showed that a sample of high school principals devoted nearly 15% of their school time to the student activity program, noting that the "principals perceived the extra-curricular activity program as a unifying force within the school." Martin and Willower, "The Managerial Behavior of High School Principals," op cit., p. 84.

20. See, W. Brookover, et al., School Social Systems and Student Achievement: Schools Can Make a Difference (New York: Praeger, 1979); also G. Grant, "What Makes a Good School? The New Policy in Education," Paper presented at AERA, Boston, April, 1980.